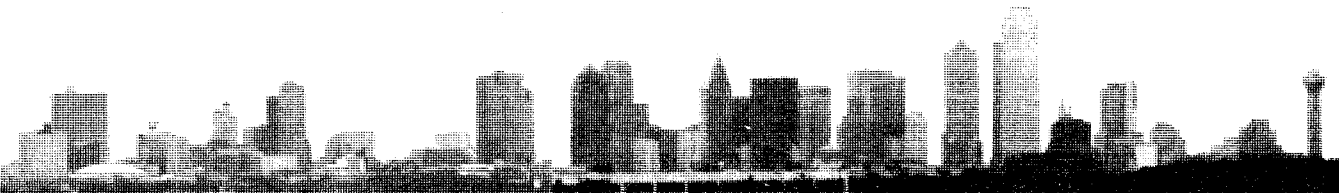


MCCC NEWS

Metroplex Commodore Computer Club



Fort Worth

Volume 12 Issue 5 — May 1994

Dallas

Picasso II

24-bit graphics and more
usenet review by David Hopper

The Picasso II is a 24-bit graphics board with a Retargetable Graphics system. Additional software includes *TVPaint Junior* and a number of image viewing utilities.

AUTHOR/COMPANY INFORMATION

Germany:
Village Tronic¹
Braunstrasse 14
D-30169 Hanover, Germany
Telephone: + 49/(0)511/13841
FAX: + 49/(0)511/1612606

USA:
Expert Services
7559 Mall Road
Florence, KY 40142
Telephone: (606) 371-9690
FAX: (606) 282-5942

LIST PRICE

\$549.95 (US) for one-meg version. An additional \$72 for the two-meg version.

I paid \$499.95 at a dealer for the one meg board, and acquired the additional meg of DRAM direct from Expert Services for \$72 (it's 45 nanosecond RAM, and RAM is expensive today anyway). I have seen the board as low as \$465 in mail-order shops (but we should all support our local dealer, right?).

SPECIAL HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE REQUIREMENTS

HARDWARE

SYSTEM: A2000, A3000, or A4000 with any empty Zorro II or Zorro III slot (the card itself is Zorro II). The included pass-through monitor cable is a 15 pin male to male cable; it will work directly with an A3000 or a 2000

with an A2230 deinterlacer card. If you own a 4000, you will need to use the 23 pin RGB adapter provided with the A4000. If you have a MicroWay flickerFixer, you will need a 9 pin to 15 pin VGA adapter, available directly from the manufacturer, or from a cable dealer.

PROCESSOR: A CPU faster than a 68000 is not required, although viewing and editing 8 and 24-bit images is always fairly CPU intensive. The on-board Cirrus blitter makes certain graphics manipulations speedy regardless of the CPU.

MONITOR: A multiscan monitor is required; a 1080, 1084, or 1084S won't cut it. 14" or higher is recommended.

MEMORY: The system hooks take very little overhead, and there are no special memory requirements for the Workbench emulation. Some Fast RAM might be nice for the Picasso II to keep screens in. A2000 owners with a full 8 megs of Zorro II memory (i.e. not on an accelerator board) will need to run the Picasso II in segmented mode, resulting in slower performance.

TVPaint Jr. will run with 4 megs of fast memory, but things will be tight. Since my recent upgrade to 8 megs of fast memory, *TVPaint Jr.* has run comfortably in 640x480x24 and 800x600x8, and barely in 1024x768x8 (no undo buffer).

SOFTWARE

AmigaDOS 2.04 or greater required. To use an 8-bit Workbench, AmigaDOS 3.0 or greater is required.

MACHINE USED FOR TESTING

Amiga 3000/25
8 Megs Fast RAM, 2 Megs Chip RAM
A-Max II+ Macintosh emulator

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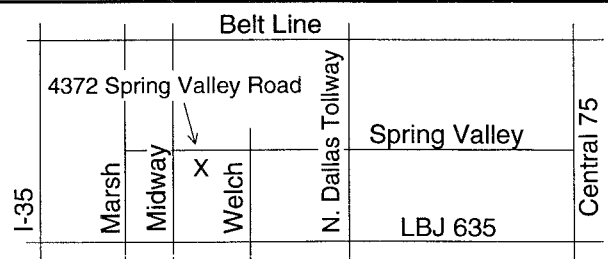
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Picasso II 2 meg board
NEC MultiSync 4DS (17" monitor)
Kickstart 2.04 (37.175), Workbench 2.1 (38.35)

INSTALLATION

Installation is easy: simply plug the board in, connect the short monitor cable from your Amiga's Video Out port to the Picasso, and plug your monitor into the Picasso's second video port. The board fit very snugly and took me some force to fit into the slot. The software installation uses Commodore's Installer program, and is very straightforward. You will need to know the maximum horizontal scan rate that your monitor can sync to; I clicked on "57kHz" for my MultiSync, and I was off and running.

REVIEW

The Workbench emulation and RTG subsystem consist of only three files: `village.library`, `vilintuisup.library`, and the Picasso monitor file. Additionally, there are some useful utilities included with the Picasso II and actively supported by Village Tronic and Expert Services:

- **ChangeScreen:** A commodity to "promote" applications that do not directly support the display database, so they can (potentially) run on the Picasso board.
- **StyxBlank:** A screen blanker commodity.
- **ViewIFF:** IFF/IFF24 picture viewer.
- **ViewJPEG:** JPEG picture viewer.
- **ViewGIF:** GIF picture viewer.
- **PlayMPEG:** MPEG animation viewer/decompressor.
- **Play:** Views uncompressed MPEGs at up to 25 frames/second.
- **IntuiView:** This is a GUI front-end for the utilities included with the Picasso. With it, you can launch programs, view images and animations, read text files, or configure your own filetypes.

The remaining files are benchmark utilities, graphics test programs, AmigaGuide help files, and developer autodocs and examples. Drivers are included for *Art Department Pro*, *ImageFX*, *ImageMaster*, *Real3D*, and *Reflections*. Finally, the Picasso II is bundled with *TVPaint Junior*, a fantastic 24-bit paint program, little brother to the legendary *TVPaint*.

Upon plugging the board in and installing the software, a quick reboot left me facing a 640x200 4 color screen. Once I launched Screenmode (just the standard preferences program), I was faced with a tough decision. In addition to the regular Amiga modes, I was given the choice of eight new ones: 320x240, 640x480, 800x600, 1024x768, 1120x832, 1152x900, 1280x1024, and 1600x1280. I have fully tested them all and discovered a few things. (NOTE: these observations may be specific to my NEC 4DS monitor. Your results may differ if you have a different monitor.) 1600x1280 flickers like an old NTSC:Hires-Interlaced screen, and is much too small. I notice no flicker at all on the 1280x1024 screen, but again, it was just too small for my 17" screen. My 4DS will not sync to 1152x900 at all (this is the monitor's fault; the

sync rates fall well within spec), and 1120x832 (NeXT resolution) requires some manual screen adjustment. I've found 1024x768 to be a terrific balance between screen size, legibility, and compatibility.

Now, I need to admit that I was expecting to see 8-bit Workbench support with the Picasso, even though I've only a 3000 with AmigaDOS 2.1, but this is not the case. The Picasso programmers have decided not to play any color depth tricks with Intuition, and have left it up to the OS. This is fine with me, as it seems to have boosted the Picasso's Workbench emulation above competing boards' emulation schemes (from what I gather), which all add hooks to Intuition to provide 256 on-screen colors with a 2.x system. For the sake of compatibility, I am quite content to wait for 3.1 to be released for my machine. With MagicWB installed, I'm not as anxious to get an 8-bit Workbench (yet!).

I have had the board for four weeks now, and have thrown everything I've got against it. I was pleased and relieved to discover that A-Max II works just fine with the board; the Picasso passes the video right through to the monitor (as long as you use Productivity mode with A-Max, that is). Perhaps the Picasso's strongest suit is its grace under pressure. It has rarely failed to pass through screens and programs which use illegal graphics calls. A comprehensive list of the programs I use daily will follow, and whether the board directly supports, promotes or passes through the video. The Picasso directly supports those programs that use AmigaDOS' own Display Database. If the board promotes the program, I have listed the maximum usable resolution that the program itself can handle (on my monitor). And yes, as a matter of fact, I **did** pay for all of this software. :^)

COMPATIBILITY LIST (for my setup) APPLICATIONS

A-Max II+, 2.56	passed through
AmigaVision 1.70Z	promoted (1600x1280)
AdPro 2.3.0	special (24-bit saver)
DigiPaint3	passed through
Directory Opus 4.11	Display Database (1600x1280)
Distant Suns 4.2	promoted (640x480)
DPaintIV	passed through
Digital Sound Studio	passed through
MandelMania	passed through
Mand2000 Demo	Display Database (1600x1280)
PageStream 2.1	promoted (1600x1280)
ProWrite 3.3.1	promoted (1600x1280)
Term 3.4	Display Database (1600x1280)
Terminus 2.0a	Display Database (1600x1280)
TVPaint Junior	special (direct support)
VistaPro 3.00	passed through (saves IFF24)
VLT Jr. 5.576	promoted (800x600)
WordPerfect 4.1.12	promoted (1600x1280)

UTILITIES

AIBB 6.1	passed through(*)
EdPlayer 2.1	passed through (full screen)
MegaD 2.00	promoted (1600x1280)

PowerPacker Pro	promoted (640x480)
Plotypus	promoted (1600x1280)
ProTracker 3.01	promoted (640x480)
Xoper 2.4	promoted (1600x1280)

Wing Commander	passed through
Wings	locks up

(*) AIBB can be promoted, but its Intuition benchmarks aren't usable on screens other than the default Amiga screens.

GAMES

SimAnt	promoted! (640x480)
Act of War	passed through
Black Crypt	passed through
ChessMaster 2000	promoted! (320x240)
Civilization	passed through
Eye of Beholder II	passed through
F-18 Interceptor	passed through
Indiana Jones/Atlantis	passed through
MechForce 3.81	passed through
MegaFortress	passed through
Might & Magic III	passed through
Moria	passed through
Out of this World	locks up
Pinball Fantasies	locks up
Populous II	passed through
Shanghai	promoted! (320x240)
Space Hulk (floppy)	passed through
Syndicate	locks up

Now, I won't dig back through my archived disks to find more games that fail, but of these that I play regularly, I'd say that 4 fails out of 20 isn't bad at all (too bad they're my 4 best games ;-). If these were booted from floppy, they would probably work. You get the idea, though. The other programs I use regularly, like *AmiBack*, sits happily on the Workbench. Compatibility has been excellent with the Picasso, and I've not had to sacrifice a single program, save for four games.

What's really terrific about the Picasso II is that my Chip RAM rarely dips below 1.9 megs. All background screens are copied only to Fast RAM, and the frontmost screen is kept on the Picasso II's DRAM. Screen-swapping occurs as fast as my monitor can sync up to the new screen, or virtually immediately for two screens of the same resolution (maybe 1/10 of a second).

BUGS

The Picasso RTG system tries very hard not to alter Intuition's behavior in the way it handles screens. It is, I believe, the only RTG board (besides the Merlin) that still allows you to drag your screens, something I don't think I could ever do without. Such attention to detail can't be an easy thing to program.

In using the one-meg Picasso, certain little things would occur with certain software. For instance, I discovered that *Terminus 2.0a* would corrupt the Picasso's display if it did three successive jump scrolls. Or *DirOpus* would sometimes leave bits and pieces of its interface lying around the Workbench. None of these things affected program execution, but it was an annoyance nonetheless. Pinpointing whether or not it's a Picasso bug, or a bug with the application trying to deal with a screen it wasn't



programmed to work with, can be a difficult thing.

To Village Tronic's and Expert Service's credit, updates have been coming furiously. Right now it looks as if a significant upgrade occurs on a monthly basis. Upgrades are available in the US for the cost of a late-night call to their BBS in Kentucky (or Germany, depending on your hemisphere). Brick Eksten and Scott Bennett at Expert Services have been extremely helpful, attentive, and competent both on the phone and through the support BBS.

Once I upgraded the Picasso II to two megs of video DRAM, all of the graphics artifacting disappeared entirely. *TVPaint Junior*, too, is much happier with 2 megs of video memory on board. If you are experiencing any kind of video corruption or cosmetic glitches, you may wish to consider upgrading your DRAM until a fix from Village Tronic is available.

Since my upgrade, my configuration has become quite stable. The only crashes I experience are when I get adventuresome with individual program settings (like trying to force Lyapunovia 1.5 or MandelMania to use a 1280x1024 256-color screen— whoops).

TVPAINT JUNIOR

Perhaps the best part of the Picasso II software is the bundled *TVPaint Jr.* If you're thinking that it probably isn't that useful as a 'crippled' version of *TVPaint*, think again. It deserves its own full review, but I will run down some of the most important features here.

TVPaint Jr. reads and writes ILBM/IFF24, JPEG, and its own DEEP format. It works with 32-bit data: 24 bits of color and an 8-bit alpha channel. All of the basic drawing functions are there, as are spline curves, text, airbrush, magnification, and brush support. Things missing from classic *TVPaint* are full anti-aliasing on drawing functions and freehand brush support. This last one is a bummer, as it allows only rectangular brushes. Brush mapping is supported, but only horizontally. Brushes can be inverted, rotated, and stretched.

TVPaint's palette control is great. Full colorwheel and RGB/CMY/HSV color choice is supported. Four separate color cycling ranges may be defined, and cycle fills and color density fills are supported. Color masking and locking are fully supported. The LUT, or Look-Up Table, is a powerful feature that allows you to perform image-processing functions on the image. By altering an X:Y plot of source values:result values, you can create a negative of the image, lighten or darken the image, solarize, or create a false-color effect. Compositing images using the Alpha channel is fully implemented.

Finally, the color modes. Color and Stamp work like we're all used to. Smooth is available as a drawing mode, in spite of it not being built-in to the drawing functions. Smear is a mode that is very similar to running your finger across a wet painting (duh...). Shift is my favorite of all. Everything under the brush is moved along the direction of the brush (I like what the manual says about this: the colors are "carried by the breath of its passage." Ah, those French). Different from Smear, Shift keeps the image under the brush intact. With it, I've been able to make some rather disturbing images of bug-people and

towering VistaPro crags. Nice. Transparency mode allows you to paint 'through' the spare screen (great when you create a negative of the original image on the spare screen). Shade and Light modes do just that; and finally, Grain mode generates irregular 12-bit dithering to 'dirty' up impeccably clean images.

The program is fast. Very fast. I've got a 25 MHz '030, but I still have the idea that this program is written entirely in Assembler.

That gives you an idea of what *TVPaint Jr.* is capable of; obviously, classic *TVPaint* will give you more features. But the engine, speed, and the most powerful modes and features are the same.

SPEED

There has been a great deal of debate on comp.sys.amiga.graphics as to whether or not Zorro II versus Zorro III really makes all that much difference when working with RTG cards like the Picasso II, Piccolo, Spectrum, Retina, and Merlin. All I have to add to that particular debate is that I work with 16-bit ISA graphics cards on PC's every day: cards like the Video-7 VRAM II and the #9 GXE. The Picasso's apparent speed on my Amiga is no worse than similar 16-bit cards in the PC world. And on my system, it's damn fast. Redraws, fills, blits... all are faster than the Amiga's own blitter. You should see Distant Suns' or SimAnt's sluggishness disappear when run on the Picasso, and my Workbench just flies now. The number-mongers can debate as much as they'd like; what I have right now is a fast system that works.

VENDOR SUPPORT

As I mentioned earlier, support by both Village Tronic and Expert Services has been tremendous. The support BBS has an active message base, as well as a file base that has the current build of the RTG drivers. Additional utilities are available on the BBS such as an FLI animation player for the Picasso and a demo version of Expert Services' *Canvas*, a multi-module screen blanker for the Picasso. The people I've dealt with at Expert Services have been friendly and eager to help, and I've not had a problem getting through to them at all, even on Saturdays.

WARRANTY

One year, applies to original purchaser.

CONCLUSIONS

The Picasso II provides Amiga users with RTG in a mature way: provide the user with a system that works, that allows them to use high-resolution displays, and works seamlessly with the Amiga's own tried-and-true interface, Intuition. I've not had to change a **thing** with the way I work on my Amiga, right down to my draggable screens. Once I get OS 3, I'll have a virtual AGA machine. As for the additional 24-bit GUI's like the EGS system for other boards, I'll pass. I've seen and used the interface, and unless it becomes Intuition, I'm content that most popular 24-bit programs will be written specifically for the Picasso II until AmigaDOS 4 and RTG hit the streets. ✓

Amiga Library News

public domain and shareware picks
from Bill Raecke

Only fourteen new MCCC disks this month. Did I say ONLY fourteen? That's still a pretty good haul for one month. And, like last month, these disks are full of good stuff. Of course, as always in this article, you get to read about MY favorites. Here they are...

ClipArt

Our club clipart collection has been growing by leaps and bounds lately. Not to break the trend, this month features clipart on MCCC-A_681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, and 688. All but the first disk are FULL of clipart. This is top quality. For a sampling, all of the clipart in this month's newsletter comes from this month's disks.

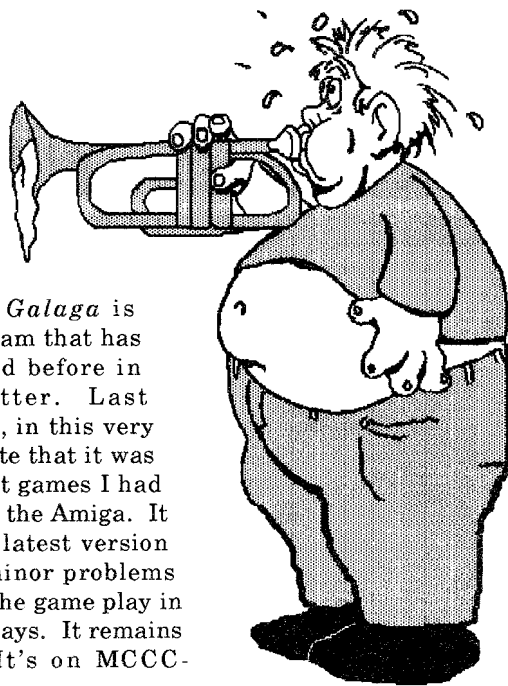


AmiCDROM by Frank Munkert

A couple of months ago, this newsletter featured a full review of AmiCDROM. That being the case, I won't go into any great detail now as I will assume that you read the article and may, in fact be using it on your system. This is simply the latest release of the product — version 1.9 — which adds several new features. If you have a CD ROM player you owe it to yourself to check this one out. In many ways *AmiCDROM* equals or exceeds the commercial products available. It's on MCCC-A_679.

Deluxe Galaga by Edgar M. Vigdal

Deluxe Galaga is another program that has been featured before in this newsletter. Last month in fact, in this very column, I wrote that it was one of the best games I had run across for the Amiga. It still is. This latest version fixes a few minor problems and changes the game play in some subtle ways. It remains a winner. It's on MCCC-A_691.



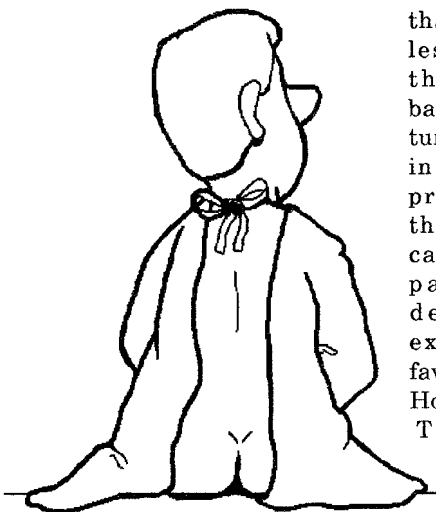
Tracker Music

Yep...we have more tracker music, although the pickings are rather scarce this month. As a matter of fact, there are only two tunes available. Both are worth listening to, but if I have to be picky I'll choose an upbeat version of the theme from the TV show, *Giligan's Island*. You'll find this one on MCCC-A_681.

WallPaperVI by David Walthour

I never thought I'd be plugging someone else's Workbench backgrounds — but these are too good to ignore. Like mine, they are designed to be used on a 16-color interlaced Workbench...but these are just brushes rather than full screen images like the ones I ordinarily

do. The benefit to that is that they take up much less memory. To use them as full-screen backgrounds, you simply turn on the "Tile" feature in *NickPrefs'* WBPicture program. The images themselves range from cartoon characters to patterns of various designs — all are excellent. One of my favorites is of "Calvin and Hobbs." Check 'em out. They're on MCCC-A_692. ✓



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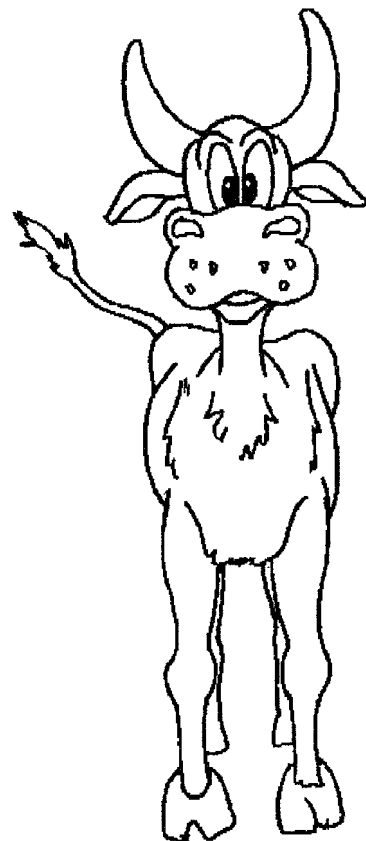
MCCC Amiga Classes

The Metroplex Commodore Computer Club will offer two special Amiga classes in June. The classes are scheduled for Saturday, June 11 and will be held at the Richardson Civic Center (411 West Arapaho, Richardson).

Introduction to Workbench will be a morning class (9:00 - 11:30) and will be a general overview of the Amiga operating system. This class is intended for the novice user and those interested in gaining deeper insight into how AmigaDOS works. Students should expect to have a better understanding of menus, drawers, icons, tooltypes, WBStartup, the Startup-sequence and User-startup, commodities, devices, and assigns. The class will also include a quick look at several utility programs that make using the Amiga even easier.

Introduction to Telecommunications will be an afternoon class (1:00 - 3:30). The class is designed to help those new to telecommunications understand the hardware and software requirements. Topics covered will include modems, modem configuration, demonstrations of telecommunication software, and the various file archiving utilities. This class will feature a live session with the MCCC BBS.

There is no registration fee for these classes. All MCCC members are welcome to attend. If you plan to attend (or need more information) please call Harold Williams (817-483-0537) or Steve Nichols (214-530-6345) to reserve your place in the class.



CHAPTER NEWS

Amiga Central Johnny Kitchens

For the first time this year, I had to drop the visor to keep the sun out of my eyes as I drove to the meeting. Yep, it's springtime and the days are getting longer. It also means parking gets a little harder. All those people playing different physical games in the extra daylight, add in some parking lot repairs and two other meetings going on and it means parking way out from the building. Longer days are on the way!

Tonight's meeting got started with the passing around of an ad from a company called Oregon Research News. The Amiga still has some support! Scott Lamb read us some interesting info on the 68060 which had its coming-out party on the 18th. Stock rumors were hot and heavy, but none have proved true or false. We discussed NewTek's split up. That's a hard one for us. An alternative to the Screamer, called the Raptor gave us all something to ponder. News of 3.1 circulating in Europe came up! Where's ours? Someone asked what was the best IDE drive to get? Anyone seen a list lately? Anyone seen the latest hard drives? Tiny, fast, and new connector designs. This was probably one of our shortest talk sessions I remember in a long time!

Next, we had a presentation of a new game created by our own Scott Lamb. The game, called *Operation Combat II*, also features several other club members' work as well. This game features a combat simulation that plays one on one, you against the computer, and can even be played over the modem. The game features different terrain such as desert, jungle, and cities. There are six in all. Combine these with the different fighting elements that are present, and you get a game that offers a huge amount of variation.

Scott told us that this game could be played on just about every Amiga out there as long as it had 1 meg of memory. As I watched this game run I thought of how this could be the chess game of today. Chess features warlike strategy based on war of its day. Thus *Operation Combat II* does just this. Someone may point out that there are elements of modern war that are missing, but look at how many elements are missing from chess. Maybe everyone should consider getting this just because of the involvement of our fellow members! After his presentation Scott gave away a copy of the game. Now there's a lucky guy!

Our meeting this month was visited by a couple of writers for an English Amiga publication. They told us that the Amiga gets just as much support over there as it does here. I always thought it was better! They pointed out that many dealers were unable to get CD32s, and had large orders. That certainly doesn't sound encouraging.

Another interesting thing at this month's meeting was all the stuff for sale. If you read last month's article on Zorro III cards for the 4000, then you are familiar with the infamous Fastlane that caused many heartaches for a certain member. Well, he sold it at the meeting to a friend of mine. He's already talked to the distributor, and oddly enough

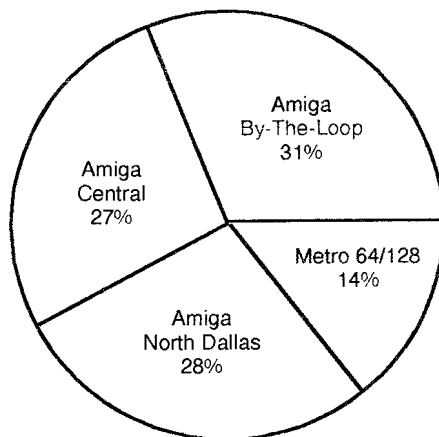
they want a copy of the article. I wonder why? It's not working 100%, but it is working, folks. Stay tuned and maybe we'll have a follow-up on this wandering piece of hardware.

Well, next month we should have a demo of *Calagari* by Jerry Smith. Come on and see for yourself what all the excitement is!

Amiga North Dallas Genny White

We welcomed about 20 folks to our April gathering. Hope you all come back (and more of you out there join us!) on the 3rd Tuesday in May. While you're writing that on your calendar, you might flip over a few pages and mark the *July* meeting on the *4th* Tuesday, moved due to a schedule conflict at the church. While you're at it, why not write in June, and August, and... we just keep going, and going, and...

Anyhow, we had some interesting tidbytes of news and rumors this month. Steve Nichols sez Creative Computers has contracted with a manufacturer to produce a 1084 monitor clone, to be available in June (see article in *Amiga World*). Gloomy news was heard about Commodore: their stock is no longer on the exchange, but someone bought 25 million shares before it went away. We had heard a very negative report that the shareholders' meeting lasted about 10 minutes and was unproductive, but issue 2.13 of the *Amiga Report* online magazine gave a somewhat more positive report. Ned Kelly and others shared news about the internal split at NewTek, with many of their key employees leaving to form a new company. Newtek has changed directions with their "Screamer" concept. We'll have to wait and see what comes along. Steve also had news of a PC Toaster clone being developed by the people



CHAPTER NEWS

that gave us DCTV. Some lively conversation was held on the subject of the "Information Superhighway," encryption, government regulation, and so forth. We heard there's some new encryption algorithm software now available on our BBS, if you're interested. I brought up a problem we're having with the MultiStart II switch... the 1.3 and 2.1 ROMs work fine installed directly, but we don't even get a power light when the switch is installed. Nobody present had a solution to offer, although Steve said his worked fine. The hardware doesn't match our installation illustrations. Anyone out there have any suggestions? Ned had a problem trying to redirect output from a script file, and received a few ideas. Another member is experiencing trouble with a GVP Fax application, and it appears the software is just too old to support the current popular modems. My, how things change in a hurry in this business!

Input requested: MCCC will be starting an educational program at the Richardson Civic Center in June. We need to know what you want to know! Anyone with ideas for classes please contact Steve Nichols. Remember that member education is a primary function of the club... and our most knowledgeable teachers are waiting to share their experience with you!

It was a pleasure to have our Club President Ned Kelly present our demo for the evening on the *PhonePak* fax and voice mail system by GVP. This system runs on the A2000, 3000, or 4000 machine [but the A3000 requires special memory — ask your dealer]. The Zorro II card has two phone jacks on the back, to allow phone input to the system and a line out to your local phone unit. There are two RCA audio-type connectors, so *PhonePak* can play audio from the phone line to the speakers, or generate audio for the user to hear that does NOT go

out on the phone line. Each card can only support one phone line, but you can add multiple cards. Ned briefly mentioned the fax capability and a handy rolodex-type lookup that lets *PhonePak* dial your friends for you, but he doesn't personally use those features. His specialty is the voice mail system. The software lets you define different "mailboxes" with various attributes, including a custom greeting message for whichever mailbox is in use. If you have fancy digitizing equipment, you can record your greetings and other messages and use them with *PhonePak*, but the easiest (and, seemed to me, quite acceptable) way is to call yourself from another phone line and store it via *PhonePak*. The system takes 9600 samples/second for incoming messages, and stores the data at the rate of about 1K per second on disk. There is a compression option that can save you half the disk space, but if you don't have an accelerated system (or it's very busy), there won't be enough CPU time to compress the messages. Ned gave us a lot of detail I'm leaving out here, but we had a very thorough tour of the package. When an incoming caller leaves a message, it is digitized and a note appears on your screen. You can pick which one(s) you want to hear, delete, etc., via the mouse, or retrieve your messages from a remote phone like most regular answering machines. All the basic "leave your message at the beep" features are there, but this system goes far beyond those simple functions. You can set up caller codes, and *PhonePak* will greet the caller, when recognized, with a custom message you have stored for that individual. You can arrange for the caller to select who he/she wishes to leave a message for (Someone, Someone Else, or Anybody Home, for example). Ned has the system greet friends and hand over control to an ARexx script that hollers for

somebody to pick up the phone. That Pesky Salesman would still get the cool "leave your message at the beep" sort of response. Last but not least, with a handy gadget plugged into the serial port, Ned could call home and tell the Amiga to turn on the porch light for him, and *PhonePak* would pass the word to the serial port and the signal would go out to the porch light switch. What's this world coming to??? Thanks, Ned!

Tom Brooks has found some FREE "no hardware needed" answering machine software. He put it out on his BBS, if you're interested. Next month: Bill Raecke with a Workbench Utilities presentation, including *NickPrefs* and *Tools Daemon*. Bill always knows his stuff, so I'm really looking forward to this one! Thanks, Steve, for continuing to arrange interesting and worthwhile demos for us. See you all there!

Metro C64/128

Brenda Sessums

Moshi, moshi, Metro C-64/128 Users! Great news: our chapter appears to be growing at a faster rate than any other chapter in the MCCC. Not only that, we had eighteen totally thrilled people who blew in to participate in April's meeting. Jo Lynn missed out on the fun and the door prizes this month because she was home sick with the crud. This ever popular ailment has really been making the rounds lately. Rick Sealy brought some flyers and some great software from Software Etc. in Allen. Rick had three copies of *Little Computer People*, and a copy of *Geos* (for \$15!). Brenda snatched up one of the *Little Computer People* real quick! The one she bought from Rick had a grey-headed man moving in.

Mike Sessums found a contact on the Ham Radio FidoNet for C-64 and 128 software. Brian Johnson of San Diego, California sent Mike 12

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disks of public domain HAM and shortwave listening software! Brian copied the programs on disks that Mike provided, and then Mike will try to put copies of this great software in the chapter member's library in the next couple of months.

Our door prizes this month were generously donated by Commodore Country. There were two "Advanced Dungeons and Dragons" games: *Pool of Radiance* and *Hillsfar*. The hilarious *Three Stooges* was also donated by Commodore Country, as was a \$25 grab bag. Here's the Winner's Circle:

- \$25 grab bag:
Mary Louise Hagemeyer
- AD&D Pool of Radiance:
Vincent Sala
- AD&D Hillsfar:
Hershel Hoover
- Three Stooges:
Leonard Bowser

The AD&D prizes were well appreciated, and Leonard couldn't wait to do a little eye poking and pie throwing! Ooh, was Mary excited with her grab bag goodies! Her booty from this haul was *Super Huey II*, *High Roller*, *One on One: Julius Erving* and *Larry Bird*, *Talladega* (racing), *Home Accountant*, *Hydrax*, *Sluggo*, *Gold Medal Games* (six world-class games), *Geos* (program and manual), and *Starcross*. What would you give for all that? Well, don't answer... there's more! Mary also won a set of paddles, two cartridges (*Jupiter Lander*, and *HesWare*), and an amazing green plastic disk box. Wow! Mary said she will bring some of the goodies back to share with other members. Thanks, Mary. And thanks to Commodore Country in Burleson for providing the prizes.

Phil Heberer came back from lounging around San Antonio with his cat Buddy Bob just in time for the meeting. Members really kept Phil's drives humming with library copies.

Phil and Kyle Spears, Brenda Sessums' brother, helped Jeanne and Darryl Sullivan, Pet owners, troubleshoot their computer. By the way, there are even some programs in the club library for Pet, if anyone is interested.

John Burt demonstrated *Sky Travel*. This shows you a world map where you use a joystick to select from where in the world you want to view the sky. This one is a commercial program that John says you can still buy for about \$20. If you enter in a daylight time for viewing, the sky is light blue; if you enter in a night time hour, the sky is black. In both cases, you see the stars, galaxies, and planets in their estimated positions. This program displays both star charts and the sky as you would actually view it. We got to see the sky over Athens, Greece in 431 B.C. at 5:16 p.m. (was that standard time?) — wow! We even got to see an eclipse. Apparently there is no limitation to what sky phenomenon you can view with this program. You can even create your own hypothetical sky and sky events. If you know the coordinates for Haley's Comet, you can even watch it pass. The book does have the coordinates for the comet's passing in 1985. Another example John entered from the manual displayed the Magellanic Clouds over South America on December 14, 1985. John selected the one of the clouds and got scrolling information across the bottom of the screen. It showed the information for the Large Magellanic Cloud, and other details, including the NGC numbers. Phil Heberer showed us that if you change your field of view, you can even view your own feet with the stars below! (Was this egotistical programming, or what?) This program even has a print option. John said that the manual is written in half-way layman's terms. What would you like to see? Maybe an eclipse over Washington, D.C. on

inauguration day?

We heard about two programs from *Commodore Format* magazine. The *PowerPack 40* tape Mike and John demonstrated included *Jockey's Darts*, a dart game, and *Interword*, a word processor. Brenda used a Super Snapshot cartridge to copy the programs from tape to disk for use in the demo. *Jockey's Darts* was excellent, could be played by two players, and got almost everyone involved. The only problem was that no one actually knew how to play darts! Phil stepped in and enlightened us. There were three different games you could play including *Round the Clock* and *Tournament*. John started out playing Mike Sessums on the Tournament play. The rules were that you started with 501 points, and each player shoots three darts per round. As you shoot, the points go down and you try to get to zero without going over. That's the tough part!

Remember, if you want to keep getting support from retailers for your Commodore computers, be sure to support the retailers! (Two come to mind real quick: Commodore Country in Burleson, and Software Etc. in Allen. Just ask one of the club officers if you need a phone number or directions!)

Can you speak Hungarian? Well, this month's report comes from *Amiga User International*. The Hungarians have a multi-format magazine called *Guru* that covers Amiga, PC, and the ever-popular Commodore 64. They also have a weekly TV spot where they highlight exciting programs from these formats (a good reason that sales have just topped 10,000 issues per month. Because the proliferation of Commodore machines is so great there, and some great software releases have been coming from there, Hungary has become known as Commodore Country. How do they feel about that in Burleson?

The Fine Print

The Metroplex Commodore Computer Club

Statement of Purpose: The Metroplex Commodore Computer Club is a not-for-profit organization devoted to the collection and dissemination of computer knowledge, to the encouragement of computer education, and to the use of Commodore computers in the home, at school, and in business.

Legal Stuff: The MCCC is not connected with Commodore Business Machines, Inc. Commodore and Commodore product names (PET, CBM, VIC, C64, C128, and Amiga) are registered trademarks of Commodore, Inc.

Meetings and Membership: Our meetings are open to all. Family membership dues are \$24 per year or \$15 for six months, and entitle the member to a monthly mailed copy of the MCCC News, free access to the club's extensive public domain and shareware software library, and discounts at many area merchants. An additional \$12 annual fee provides access to the MCCC multi-user Bulletin Board System.

The MCCC News

Copyright Information: Material printed in the MCCC News is not copyrighted unless so noted. Articles may be reprinted or otherwise distributed by other user groups or by individuals who may find it helpful as long as proper credit is given to the author and to the MCCC.

Advertising: The MCCC News accepts two kinds of advertising. Member ads are those which are submitted by a member and which are not of a commercial nature. There is no charge for member ads. Commercial ads are those which advertise multiple like items for sale. Rates for camera-ready commercial ads are as follows for a single month or (prepaid consecutive three months): Full Page — \$36 (\$96); Half Page — \$18 (\$48); Quarter Page — \$12 (\$32); Business Card — \$6 (\$16). Materials to be inserted will cost \$.08 per copy (duplication not included) and must be inserted into all newsletters for the month.

Articles: Members are encouraged to submit articles. Articles may be submitted as ASCII text or in Amiga *excellence!*, *ProWrite*, *WordPerfect* or *Final Copy* format. They may be uploaded to the MCCC BBS, to StarText, or submitted on disk. If these methods are not possible, I will, as a last resort, accept printed articles. If graphics need to be included they may be submitted as IFF files, DR2D, *PageStream* or *Art Expressions* structured drawings, *Professional Draw* clips or, again as a last resort, printed output.

Deadline: The deadline for submissions to the MCCC News is 7am of the fourth Saturday of each month. Payment must accompany all ad copy. Make checks payable to MCCC and mail c/o Bill Raecke, 2614 Charolais Way, Arlington, Texas 76017.

Extra Copies: Extra Copies of the MCCC News are available at \$1 per copy. Orders should be forwarded with the required fee by the regular newsletter deadline.

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(METRO @ 14,400 BAUD)	817-268-4191
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Treasurer	John Sookma	817-447-1931
Secretary	Brenda Sessums	817-238-9891
Librarian	Phil Heberer	817-847-8232

Normal Meeting Schedule

1st Tuesday	MCCC Board of Directors
2nd Tuesday	Amiga By-The-Loop Chapter
2nd Saturday	Metro C-64/128 Chapter
3rd Tuesday	Amiga North Dallas Chapter
3rd Thursday	Amiga Central Chapter

SIGS

VidSIG	Chuck Johnson	817-478-7313
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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

May 3 MCCC Board of Directors
7:30 pm — N.Richland Hills Community Center
Loop 820 at Rufe Snow, N.Richland Hills

May 10 Amiga By-The-Loop Chapter
7:30 pm — N.Richland Hills Community Center
Loop 820 at Rufe Snow, N.Richland Hills

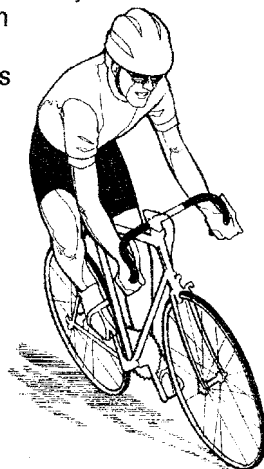
May 14 Metro C-64/128 Chapter
1:30 pm — Texas College of Osteopathic Medicine
Lancaster & Camp Bowie, Fort Worth

May 17 Amiga North Dallas Chapter
7:30 pm — King of Glory Lutheran Church
6411 LBJ Freeway, Dallas

May 19 Amiga Central Chapter
7:30 pm — Arlington Community Center
2800 S. Center, Arlington

June 7 MCCC Board of Directors
7:30 pm at the
N.Richland Hills
Community Center

Loop 820 at Rufe Snow
N.Richland Hills



June Newsletter Deadline — 7am, May 28

These Dealers offer discounts to MCCC members
Be sure to show your membership card

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2801 W. 7th Street
Fort Worth, Texas 76107
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C-64, C-128 & Amiga Software
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Burleson, Texas 76028
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